



*Agama Douglasii.*

VII. *Description of a new Species of Agama, brought from the Columbia River by Mr. Douglass. By Thomas Bell, Esq., F.R.S. & L.S.*

*Read June 17, 1828.*

Genus. AGAMA. *Daudin.*

AGAMA DOUGLASSII.

TAB. X.

A. *Poris femoralibus utrinque xx.*

*Habitat* in orâ occidentali Americæ Borealis ad ripas fluminis Columbiae.

IN its general form, colours, and marking, this species very much resembles *A. superciliosa*, *A. orbicularis*, and others of the same section of the genus. The head is obtusely triangular, with a distinct ridge overhanging the orbits: the body sub-orbicular and depressed; the tail tumid at its origin, from whence it becomes rather suddenly contracted, and tapers to its extremity. The head, body, limbs and tail, are covered on the upper side with small raised scales, interspersed with larger ones which are aculeated, and most of them quadrangular. These form distinct ridges over the eyes, above the ears, across the occiput, and along the sides of the body and tail. The under side is wholly covered with small uniform smooth scales. The gular fold is of considerable size. The colour of the upper part is a mixture of yellowish-white and

piceous disposed in dots, exactly resembling mosaic work, and with distinct, large, irregular ocelli of the latter colour, margined with white, disposed in transverse series across the back. There is also a white longitudinal central line from the occiput to the end of the tail. The under side is of an uniform faint white colour, and the femoral pores of a sulphur-yellow.

This beautiful and highly interesting species was found by Mr. David Douglass in the course of his late indefatigable and productive researches in the western parts of North America, to whom I am also indebted for the following account of its habits.

It is seen in great numbers in all woodless sandy arid deserts in the interior of the country, on the southern parts of Columbia river. On the banks of streams, in thickets composed of *Purshia tridentata*, *Artemisia* and *Salvia*, it was observed by Mr. Douglass to take up its abode, in the holes made by species of *Lepus*, *Arctomys*, &c., which are alternately occupied by them and several species of *Coluber*, which resort there for the purpose of preying on these *Agamæ* and on the Marmots. It feeds on both animal and vegetable substances. In the stomach were found coleopterous insects, and the leaves of *Purshia*, *Artemisia*, and *Salvia*. Like most others of the tribe it is very nimble during the summer months, and it is then difficult to capture it; but in April, when it first makes its appearance, or in October, before it retires to its winter habitation, being at both seasons weakly, it may be readily taken. At such seasons the traveller is constantly annoyed by them during the night, seeking shelter from the cold under his blanket, and is frequently under the necessity of removing these little intruders on his rest. "In April," continues Mr. Douglass, "I have observed the young, not exceeding half an inch in length, perfectly formed, of the same colour and equally nimble with the older ones. The colour

lour in all seasons appears to be the same both in male and female. Like the species of the genus *Coluber*, this lizard is never seen more than a mile or a mile and half from the water ; but, on the contrary, is invariably found in the greatest numbers in its immediate vicinity."

The existence of femoral pores in this species is particularly important, as it totally invalidates the generic character of *Agama* as hitherto given by authors, who have considered the absence of these organs as essentially distinguishing the genus. Whether the presence or the absence of femoral pores is to be considered as a character of sufficient importance, standing alone, to separate species otherwise perfectly similar in every circumstance both of form and structure, can hardly be determined until the use of these singular bodies is ascertained : but in our present state of ignorance on this point, it is hardly safe perhaps to view it in so important a light ; and as in every other respect this may be considered as even a typical representative of the genus, I should propose rather to alter the generic character for its reception, to the formation of a new genus by which it would be separated from its immediate congeners.